

College of the Holy Cross College Writing Goals

The Development of the College Writing Goals:

Eloquence is one of the core values identified by the 2012 Presidential Colloquium on Jesuit Liberal Arts at Holy Cross. To quote the Colloquium's report:

The liberal arts curriculum at Holy Cross values eloquence in all forms of communication. Eloquence plays a crucial role in the search for liberation and truth. Critical inquiry has little impact without the ability to share, debate, and reshape our ideas with others. The long tradition of Jesuit education emphasizes learning to speak persuasively, to write crisply, to argue and debate effectively, and to express oneself creatively. Students learn to appreciate elegance in verbal, artistic, and mathematical expression. Eloquence includes acquiring a significant understanding of another language to enable communication across cultural boundaries.

A key component of eloquence is written communication, to facilitate the critical ability to share, debate, and reshape our ideas as scholars. It is essential that we develop this skill in all Holy Cross students.

In 2010, the faculty assembly approved learning goals for a Liberal Arts education that “seek to prepare students for a lifetime of learning and moral citizenship. [Which requires they] develop skills, acquire knowledge, and cultivate intellectual and moral habits that prepare them to live meaningful, purposeful lives and to assume informed, responsible roles in their families, communities, and the world.” The first of these goals includes “the ability to think critically, write and speak clearly, read closely, evaluate and present evidence, and use information resources and technology.”¹

Students universally encounter writing in the Montserrat program, which has adopted writing goals such that students “become thoughtful and analytical producers of knowledge, not just consumers and reproducers of information.”² These goals establish a benchmark for that program as well as a foundation for later academic work.

Many departments and programs, as well as individual courses, have defined goals to help students become adept at discipline-specific writing. This is an important part of a rigorous liberal arts education. At the same time, as a College we also have a responsibility to ensure that Holy Cross students develop their writing throughout their general curriculum. Thus it makes sense for departmental writing goals and assessments to be aligned with College-wide goals and assessment of student writing.

In 2012, Dean Timothy Austin appointed an ad hoc “Expert Committee on Writing Assessment and Pedagogy” to create a rubric for writing assignments that could be adapted across the curriculum.³ After many conversations with faculty and two test sessions, the rubric⁴ was presented to the faculty and has been used by a number of individuals and departments. The work of that committee continues to inform the ongoing conversation about the value we place on written communication as evidence of producing well-educated students.

The of College-wide writing goals use concepts and language drawn from the rubric as well as from conversations developing and piloting the rubric, with a view toward articulating what we consider to be the hallmarks of written work created by all Holy Cross graduates, independent of discipline.

WRITING GOALS

Rather than adherence to a formulaic template of writing, the tradition of Jesuit education emphasizes learning to speak persuasively, to write eloquently, to argue and debate effectively, and to express oneself creatively. Demonstrating the power of written language to shape thought and influence action, graduates of the College of the Holy Cross will be able to:

- navigate the complexities and ambiguities of creating written discourse, demonstrating a sophistication in their ability to make intelligent, informed, and reflective choices about the form and function of writing across contexts
- utilize writing as a medium for creative thought in order to raise questions and propose solutions to address social, scientific, and other challenges in and outside of the academy
- develop an awareness of and appreciation for the need to be other-oriented in written communication, from both practical and ethical perspectives
- understand how and why writing is shaped by the social context in which it is produced, read, and interpreted
- critically and continually reflect on their own writing processes to self-assess and, when necessary, make adjustments to increase the effectiveness of their writing
- value writing as a form of communication that allows us to develop and maintain ethical human relationships.

As evidence of writing excellence, students of the College of the Holy Cross will work toward the production of written text that:

- recognizes and addresses audience expectations
- presents a logical and coherent structure and format
- executes a style that is precise, and displays an appropriate use of language
- engages both the creative and analytical aspects of critical thinking
- proposes arguable thesis statements that capture the composition's central idea in a thoughtful and original way
- identifies and integrates appropriate evidence that fully supports claims while also demonstrating a clear and reasonable interpretation of the evidence
- exhibits an understanding of the implications of the evidence in their analysis
- reflects consideration of the ethical aspects of written communication.

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¹ Goals of a Liberal Arts Education at the College of the Holy Cross. <https://www.holycross.edu/office-assessment-and-research/institutional-assessment>.

² Montserrat First-Year Writing Goals

Montserrat seminars provide sustained opportunities for students to develop both their intellectual approach to and execution of writing. Montserrat faculty members seek to cultivate in students a vital shift in their ways of learning, one that reflects the values of a liberal arts education. Through academic writing, students are encouraged to become thoughtful and analytical producers of knowledge, not just consumers and reproducers of information. By the end of the first year, all Holy Cross students should develop the ability to:

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- Realize that writing is a means of communication and a reflective process that requires critical thinking and planning, and that evolves through regular reconsideration of different kinds of evidence (texts, data, objects, etc.) and refinement of claims and assumptions through careful revision
 - Understand that attentive and critical reading and observation is fundamental to good writing
 - Formulate (and revisit as necessary) a central problem, idea, or question worthy of consideration
 - Identify, evaluate, and analyze primary and secondary sources to develop a thoughtful response to a central problem, idea, or question
 - Produce analytic arguments that reflect independent thinking and appropriate modes of inquiry, are supported by relevant evidence, and are presented in a logical and coherent manner
 - Identify an audience and write with clarity, precision, and in a style that communicates effectively and persuasively to that audience
 - Develop control over mechanical features, such as syntax, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and proper citation of sources
 - Understand the rules of academic honesty in writing and why they are important to follow
 - Recognize that resources are available on campus to support student writing

³ Expert Committee on Writing Assessment and Pedagogy: Chair, Patricia Bizzell, English (2012-2015), K.J. Rawson, English (2012-14), Jack Schneider, Education (2012-14), Michelle Mondoux, Biology (2014-15), Justin Poche, History (2014-15). Consulting member: Denise Bell, Director of Institutional Assessment.

⁴ A Holy Cross Writing Rubric. Center for Teaching, Resources, Writing. <http://www.holycross.edu/center-teaching/resources/writing>.